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Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06
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FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4047
INFO AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
AMEMBASSY QUITO

C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 1064

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR BL
SUBJ: PRESIDENT BANZER SAYS BOLIVIA WILL FOLLOW A POLICY OF
ACTIVE NEUTRALITY IN CASE OF WAR BETWEEN PERU AND CHILE

1. LA PAZ NEWSPAPER EL DIARIO FEBRUARY 8 CARRIES REUTERS LATIN
ARTICLE ON A FINANCIAL TIMES OF LONDON EDITORIAL BASED ON AN
INTERVIEW WITH BOLIVIAN PRESIDENT BANZER. ACCORDING TO THE ARTICLE
BANZER SAID THAT BOLIVIA WOULD FOLLOW A POLICY OF ACTIVE NEUTRALITY
IN THE EVENT OF WAR BETWEEN PERU AND CHILE. HE SAID BOLIVIA WOULD
DO ALL IT COULD TO ACHIEVE A CESSATION OF HOSTILITIES AND TO
AVOID THE ENTRANCE OF OTHER COUNTRIES INTO A DISPUTE. BANZER
EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE THAT SUCH A WAR COULD NEVER OCCUR AND THAT
IT WOULD BE DISASTEROUS FOR ALL.

2. THE WRITER OF EDITORIAL, HUGH O'SHAUGNESSY, VISITED EMBASSY
POL/ECOM OFFICER THE DAY AFTER INTERVIEW WITH BANZER (JAN 27) AND
SAID THAT IN FACT BANZER HAD TOLD HIM (BUT NOT FOR USE IN ARTICLE)
OF HIS STRONG BELIEF THAT A WAR BETWEEN PERU AND CHILE WAS IN
FACT INEVITABLE, ALTHOUGH PERHAPS IT WOULD NOT COME THIS YEAR.
BANZER GAVE O'SHAUGNESSY A LONG LIST OF REASONS WHY HE THOUGH
WAR WOULD OCCUR, WHICH O'SHAUGNESSY SAID WERE VERY CONVINCING,
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INCLUDING THE ARMS RACE AND STRONG REVANCHIST SENTIMENTS AMONG
THE PERUVIAN MILITARY. ACCORDING TO O'SHAUGNESSY, BANZER SAID
THAT BOLIVIA COULD NOT AFFORD TO DEVELOP A MILITARY CAPABILITY TO
DETER PERU OR CHILE FROM INCURSIONS INTO BOLIVIAN TERRITORY,
AND THEREFORE THE GOB POLICY WOULD BE "ACTIVE NEUTRAILITY" DEFINED
AS CALLING ON FRIENDLY COUNTRIES AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

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AS WELL AS ON THE PARTICIPANTS TO ACHIEVE A CESSATION OF
HOSTILITIES.

3. EMBASSY COMMENT: BANZER'S COMMENTS TO O'SHAUGNESSY INDICATE
THAT THE PRESIDENT CONTINUES TO RESIST PRESSURES FROM HIS MILI-
TARY TO ENGAGE IN A STEPPED-UP ARMS PROCUREMENT PROGRAM. HOWEVER
WE ARE AWARE THAT A HOT DEBATE ON THIS CONTINUES WITHIN THE MILI-
TARY ANDTHE PRESIDENT MAY EVENTUALLY HAVE TO GIVE IN A BIT IF
THE PRESSURE TO PURCHASE ARMS INTENSIFIES.
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Message Attributes

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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
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Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Subject: PRESIDENT BANZER SAYS BOLIVIA WILL FOLLOW A POLICY OF ACTIVE NEUTRALITY IN CASE OF WAR BETWEEN PERU AND CHILE
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